

Fighting 13th



Vol. 3 , No. 1 Jan. 2006

The 13th MEU(SOC) Newsletter

www.usmc.mil/13thmeu

2/1 Chaplain brings seasonal spirit to war zone

By Cpl. Andy J. Hurt

Combat Correspondent

FORWARD OPERATING

BASE (Dec. 17, 2005) – Life in a “Forward Operating Base,” or FOB, can be rough. The lack of running water, electricity and telecommunications can certainly give a Marine a feeling of isolation. That feeling, coupled with the holiday season, can be detrimental to the morale of any forward operating unit. That’s where the Chaplain comes in.

“I don’t think it’s all that bad,” said Chaplain Jeff Bornemann, the command chaplain for Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines.

Bornemann reflected on isolation during a field service for his Marines Dec. 17, and shed light on the dark notion of isolation for his Marines.

“The one thing that cannot be taken away from you is God.”

Bornemann also tackled the subject of Christmas traditions (or the lack thereof) in a combat zone.

“I’ve seen some of your

Christmas trees,” he said addressing the group of Marines who attended the service, and then laughed, “they’re pretty sorry.”

Yet Bornemann went as far as to denounce traditional Christmas ornamentations, such as caroling and lights, saying that without the presence of faith in celebration, there is no reason to celebrate.

“God is the entire purpose for the season,” he said.

Bornemann, who is stationed with the rest of the battalion command at nearby Camp Hit, said he felt it his duty to come to the FOB and speak with his Marines.

“There is no place I would rather be,” said Bornemann, “and it is my privilege to lead them in worship.”

Religious Personnel 2nd Class, or “RP”, Alan Grow, said he felt the importance of service was delivering God’s word to those who had recently found him, in the chaos of combat operations.

See **CHAPLAIN** Page 2



Photo by Cpl. Andy Hurt

Navy Lt. Jeff Bornemann, the command Chaplain for Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines, brought a seasonal devotional message into a combat zone recently when he visited the Marines of Golf Company at Forward Operating Base Train Dec. 17.

Inside this issue:

MEU Chaplain reflects on a successful old year while looking forward to a Happy New Year!

Page 2

Updated Commander’s message, Hometown Hero and holiday season birthdays.

Page 3

Teamwork in combat spawns life-long friendship while conducting operations during Operation Iron Hammer.

Page 4

Looking forward to a successful new year

By Navy Commander Val J. Jensen

13th MEU (SOC) Command Chaplain

A few nights ago while we were on the LCU (Landing Craft Utility) I could not overlook the fact that, in a short while, we would step aboard USS TARAWA (LHA-1). Above us the night scene was ablaze with blue-white stars against a blue-black sky.

As we closed in and docked I sensed precision in the maneuver and I knew we were grateful for all that was done for us especially while in Iraq. Then we saw the smiling faces and heard the words, "Welcome Home!" The expressions and greetings were great to see and hear.

Again, it speaks to our one team. It also reminds me of the first leg of our return when, after we boarded a big USAF C-17 aircraft in Iraq, the crew chief said: "You have just entered sovereign United States territory . . . Welcome Home!" It has been an honor to serve our Great Republic and to sense God's abiding presence

along the way.

The year has now passed and indeed it was a memorable one. Looking back, our respective commands accomplished so much that when history is reviewed the true impact will be registered, recognized, and appreciated for decades to come. In other words, we helped to change a region in the world and make it a better place. To accomplish this there were efforts given and sacrifices made that were truly heroic. Those warriors who are no longer with us are assured that we carry the torch and in their memory ever maintain and advance the proud traditions that have been a part of our great organization. Supporting us, encouraging us, remembering us in so many ways, were the people back home who should



justly feel that they had an important part in our successful efforts. Yes, 2005 was a year that stands in monumental profile.

2006 makes us wonder what it will bring. Quite probably it will be evidenced by many of the emotions and experiences that we have encountered in previous years. Life is like that for it embraces the words of a letter I recently received: "We don't know what the future holds but we know who holds the future"- and "we are held in His hand." So, we have cause to be encouraged knowing that with God there is meaning and purpose to our station on earth. When I was young a year seemed to be eternity and now that I am older a year seems to be a month. I remember it once said that our existence here on earth is merely a prelude to eternity.

Now, if that were true it seems fitting to have faith, make the best of it, cherish each moment, work hard, do our part, value each other and leave the rest to God.

CHAPLAIN from Page 1

"A lot of these guys came to know God out here," said Grow, a native of Bogalusa, Louisiana, "they found out that life is very short, and it can be taken from you at any moment."

Grow said he considered it his duty to bring a religious service into the field.

"I think we need to give them the opportunity to worship."

The battalion religious services personnel said they

intend to bring services to the Marines for as long as they are needed, or until the Marines board the ships of Expeditionary Strike Group One and complete the Western Pacific deployment with the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable).



The Fighting 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)



Commanding Officer:
Col. James K. LaVine

Public Affairs Officer:
Capt. Amy Malugani

Public Affairs Chief:
Staff Sgt. Houston F. White, Jr.

Editor:
Cpl. Andy Hurt

Combat Correspondent:
Sgt. Charles Moore

Combat Camera:
Cpl. Chad Leddy

Combat Camera:
Cpl. James Evans

Combat Camera:
Lance Cpl. Kyle Keathley

Mail inquiries to:
Commanding Officer
13th Marine Expeditionary Unit
ATTN: Public Affairs Office
42525
FPO AP 96610-2525

Personal Mail:
Grade/Name/USMC
13th MEU (Section)
Unit 42525
FPO AP 96610-2525

From the 13th MEU(SOC) Commanding Officer

Families and Friends,

The Fighting 13th has retrograded back to the ships after successfully completing operations in Al Anbar Province, Iraq.

The Marines and Sailors fought the fight in Iraq with unwavering courage, honor and vigilance.

Without hesitation, they answered the call several times throughout the past few months.

It is a privilege to command and serve with some of the finest warriors in the Marine Corps and Navy.

Although we are eagerly sailing toward San Diego, our mission is not yet finished.

The Marines remain focused, ready to execute any mission that may come our way.

I encourage you to keep in contact with your Marine or Sailor via email and letter mail the next few months.

Our Family Readiness Officer will continue to coordinate with the Key Volunteer Coordinator to keep you updated on our travels and changes that may come along the way.

Additionally, the website will be updated weekly with information concerning the Tiger Cruise, stories, photos and commander's updates.

Marines and Sailors are now available via email at the 13th MEU "Tarawa" accounts, but it should be noted that we are still under the mercy of security conditions that may hinder connectivity on occasion.

Mail sent after Dec. 12, was re-routed to the ship and will link up with your Marine or Sailor soon if it has not already.

It won't be long before we are with you in San Diego.

Your continued support is appreciated by all.

Semper Fi

Col J. K. LaVine

Hometown Heroes



This month's hometown hero is **Lance Cpl. Marcos Palos**, from **San Diego**. Palos is a combat engineer from the 1st Combat Engineer detachment with Battalion Landing Team 2/1. He recently conducted combat operations Steel Curtain and Iron Hammer in the Al Anbar Province of Iraq with the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable). Photo by Cpl. Andy Hurt

Command Element Birthdays!

DECEMBER

Gunnery Sgt. James Nutt
Dec. 1
S-2 Intel Chief

Staff Sgt. Omar Ebanks
Dec. 3
S-4 Supply Chief

Cpl. Himanshu Bhatia
Dec. 4
S-4 Supply Clerk

Sgt. Jason Lovett
Dec. 16
S-4 Motor Transport Chief

Cpl. Christ Kong
Dec. 19
S-4 Armorer

Cpl. Timothy Ooley
Dec. 26
S-2 Data Systems Analyst

Capt. Jonathan Knotts
Dec. 31
S-3 Forward Air Controller

JANUARY

Cpl. Nickolas Mosley
Jan. 14
S-1 Travel Clerk

Sgt. Dominic Ettson
Jan. 18
S-4 Logistician

Sgt. Benjamin Landin
Jan. 18
S-4 Logistician

Staff Sgt. Don Newton
Jan. 19
S-2 Intel Analyst

Pfc. Chang Lee
Jan. 19
S-1 Admin Clerk

Maj. Damien Spooner
Jan. 20
S-2 Intel Chief

Capt. Amy Malugani
Jan. 31
S-5 Public Affairs Officer

Sgt. Kim Dwerff - Jan. 31
S-6 Network Administrator

Golf Company Marines epitomize teamwork



Lance Cpls. Travis Vetterkind and Daniel Kohs are two Marines from Golf Company who shared a post at FOB Train - and are spawning a life-long friendship.

Photo by Cpl. Andy Hurt

By Cpl. Andy J. Hurt
 Combat Correspondent
FORWARD OPERATING BASE, Iraq (Dec. 13, 2005) – From the first day of recruit training in the Marine Corps, the doctrine of teamwork is a heavily suggested, if not preached, manner in which all aspects of duty are to be conducted. On a massive scale, the doctrine of Marine Corps warfighting strategy — a “Marine Air-Ground Task Force” — is a testament to the success that can be attributed to a group of individuals or components acting together to accomplish a mission.

On a smaller scale, Marines from Golf Company, Battalion

Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines, are defining teamwork on the very front lines — a forward operating base security post.

Two of these Marines are Lance Cpls. Travis Vetterkind and Daniel Kohs from 2nd squad, 1st Platoon. Vetterkind and Kohs stand watch at “Post One” here, and are the first line of defense in case of enemy activity.

“Our normal duties include watching the roads, reporting any suspicious activities and logging in the convoys (going out),” said Kohs. “There’s always someone on the gun and someone with the Vectors (binoculars).”

According to Vetterkind, conversation is inevitable.

“I don’t even mind coming out here for eight hours,” said Kohs, an Aurora, Ill., native. “I don’t think we ever talk about the same stuff.”

“Yeah, there’s always a childhood story to be dug up,” Vetterkind said.

Vetterkind and Kohs completed their School of Infantry training together, checked into Golf Company together and have been side-by-side for the duration of the currently underway Western Pacific deployment with the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable).

Kohs said that having such a

detailed history with his comrade is like having a brother, in this case an older brother.

“He’s a bit older than me, so he tells me about his experiences and I learn from it,” Kohs said of Vetterkind, 24.

“But I gotta teach him about the ‘new school’ too,” quipped the 19-year-old.

Like all deployed Marines, the duos conversation topics often lead their way home, a special topic of interest for the two.

“We’re both from the Midwest,” said Vetterkind, “I’m from Thorp, Wisconsin and he’s from Illinois, so we can relate.”

See **POST** Page 5

22nd MEU(SOC) assumes command in Hit



Photo by Gunnery Sgt. Keith A. Milks

With Stokes, N.C. native Cpl. Jeffrey S. Monday II standing by, Lance Cpl. Matthew G. Mahler, of Long Island, N.Y., rears back to toss a flash bang grenade into a building in Baghdadi, Iraq decorated with anti-U.S. and Iraqi government graffiti, Dec. 29. Mahler and Monday are both infantrymen from Alpha Co., Battalion Landing Team 1st Bn., 2nd Marines, the ground combat element of the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), which is in Iraq's Al Anbar province conducting combat operations in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

POST from Page 4

Personal similarities aside, Vetterkind and Kohs also had their Baptism of Fire together, battling insurgents during Operation Steel Curtain. An experience both the Marines say they will never forget.

"(In combat) we were there looking out for each other," said Vetterkind.

"The rest of the squad had our backs, too," Kohs added.

Naturally, the leadership in the unit has had its eye on the two.

Team leader Cpl. David Seitter, a native of Sacramento, Calif., is responsible for the

well-being of his Marines around the clock, ensuring no duty is neglected, no detail overlooked. Seitter testified that the professional relationship between Kohs and Vetterkind has been nothing but positive.

"It's made both of them better, and every Marine needs a best friend," he said. "Personally and professionally, they push each other to the next step."

Seitter said he is especially keen on the friendly competition between the two to reach the next rank.

"These two are setting goals

for each other and the friendly competition is taking them a long way," he said. The constant effort on Kohs' and Vetterkind's part is putting the two on a road for success.

"They mentor each other," said Seitter, "and you see Marines like that usually excel faster than those who act as individuals."

Seitter recalled his first impression of Kohs, after a bump in the young Devil Dog's record book left an uncertain future in the leaders' eyes.

"He got in some trouble, but Vetterkind gave him a 'nudge,' and it gave Kohs a lot of

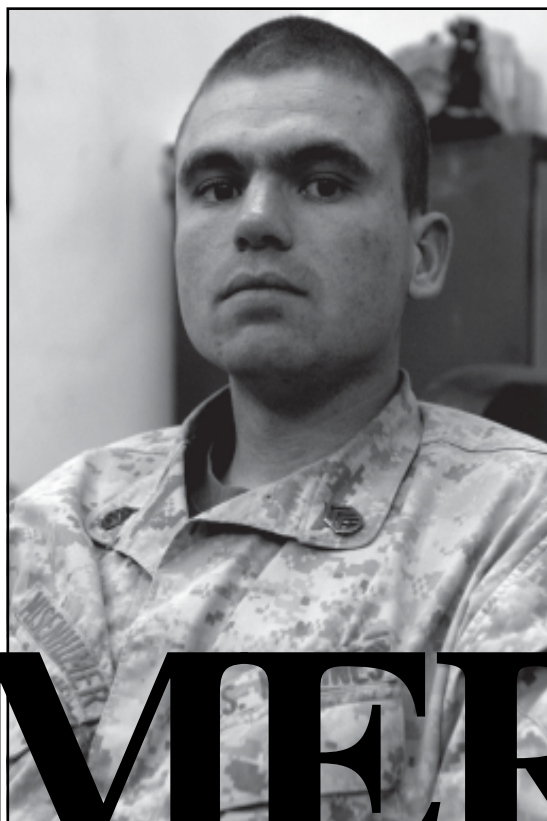
confidence. If he would have been on his own, who knows where he would be now."

The effective teamwork between the two is only a cross-section of the Marines of 2nd Squad and the 'family' atmosphere.

"That's how we keep it here," he said, "like a family."

The professional relationship between Kohs and Vetterkind, combined with the forging of a life-long friendship, is a daily reminder that in the midst of a combat deployment, teamwork goes above and beyond the call of duty — even on Post One.

IRON



HAMMER

See Page 7 for more 13th MEU photos from Operation Iron Hammer

Operation Iron Hammer- (continued)

LIGHT ARMORED VEHICLE - 25



Coloring Page!

Kids AND adults: Color this page and write a message to a Marine or Sailor of the Fighting 13th MEU. Mail your page to:

Commanding Officer
ATTN: PAO
13th MEU
Unit 42525
FPO AP96610-2525

We'll take sent masterpieces and post them aboard the ship! Remember:
Have fun and we look forward to your artistic expression!